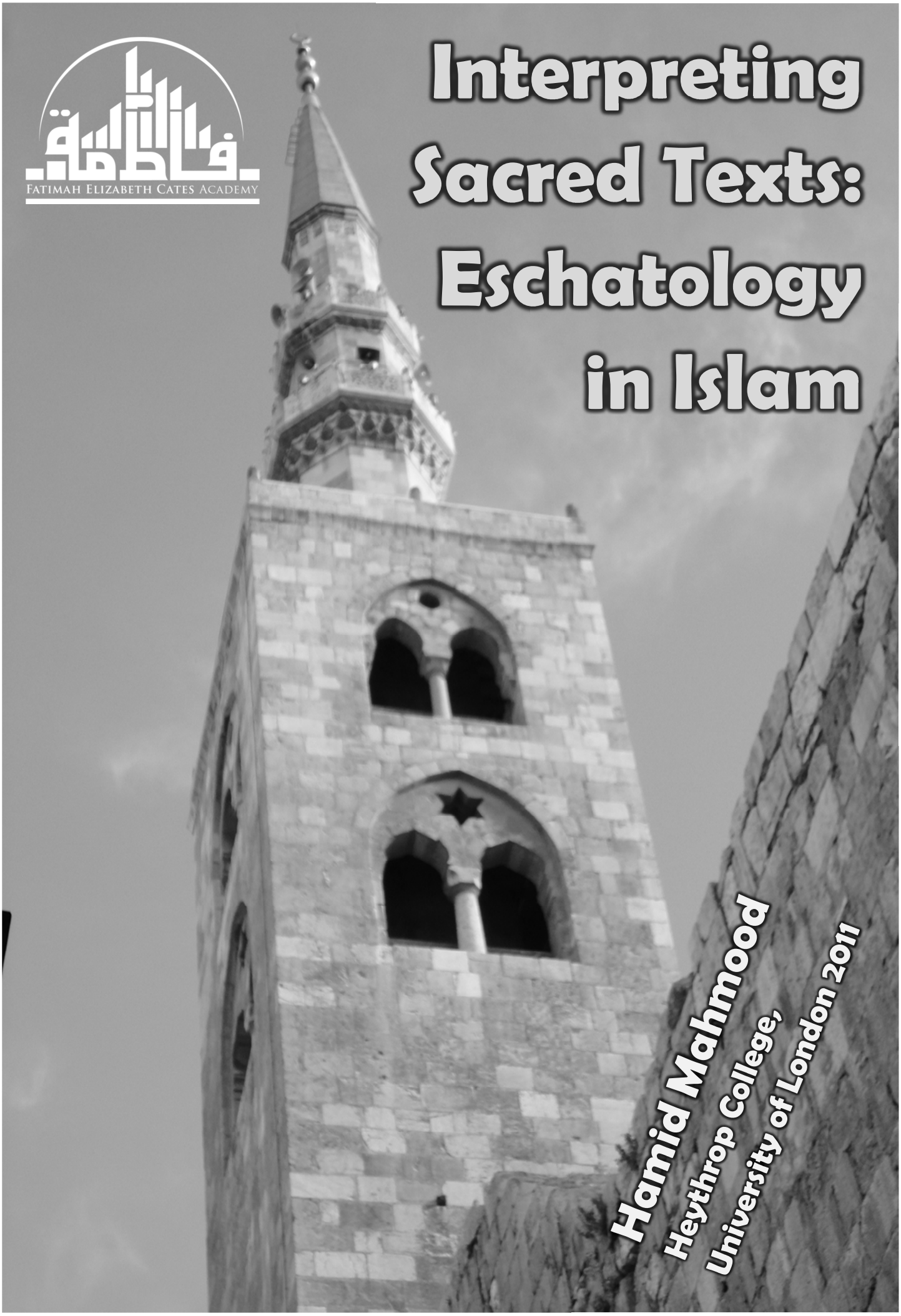

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Interpreting Sacred Texts: Eschatology in Islam
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Interpreting Sacred Texts: Eschatology in Islam

Hamid Mahmood

*(**Note**: I thought it significant to mention that the following was a dissertation I wrote to explore eschatology and interpretations that were prevalent on social media at the time of writing, hence I focused on them and chose to examine them. Lastly, the following in no way represents my beliefs but an academic exploration of the topic and to illustrate its complexities)*

Introduction

The talk of Armageddon and a '*final confrontation'* between the Abrahamic faiths seems to be the new trend. In which, most persons on grassroots level have constructed their own eschatological postulation. I believe, thoughts give rise to opinions, which are then expressed verbally; this then leads to movements either positive or negative between the Abrahamic religions. However, in the midst of such concept building, one overlooks the idea and place of *authenticity* and interpretation of the Islamic Sacred Texts (Qur'an) and Traditions of Prophet Muhammad [1] (*ḥadīth*). I therefore intend in this essay to critically analyse superficial mainstream thought of eschatology in Islam and focus my attention on 'the place of authenticity and interpretation'. For indeed it is only subsequent to having a cogent foundation based on the Qur'an or *Ḥadīth* that one may form an acceptable concept in Islam.

I will therefore analyse three major and significant eschatological concepts in Islam – understood as the 'Major Signs of *Qiyāmah'*: (1) the Mahdī; (2) the Christ (Jesus - the second coming) and Anti-Christ (*al-Dajjāl*); and (3) *Ya'jūj* and *Ma'jūj* (Gog and Magog). The reason for selecting the above notions will become clear, as indeed the first notion, the Mahdī, is neither in the Qur'an nor famous traditions of *Saḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī and Muslim. The second concept, which I have combined as one, is not in the Qur'an but on the contrary scattered throughout the *ṣiḥāḥ*, including al-Bukhārī and Muslim. The third of the notions is perspicuously expressed in the Qur'an and all Canonical books of *ḥadīth*. In this work I intend on focusing on the first notion as compared to the other notions due to its fragility in authenticity, yet many interpretations; and ultimately concepts and beliefs are based upon it. Hence, it is significant for the reader to ultimately grasp the notion of authenticity of *ḥadīth* and also that interpretations that follow are human judgements and not legitimate divine sources of knowledge in Islam.

[1] In all instances of a Muslim's speech and traditional writings the phrase 'Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH)' **(صلى الله عليه و سلم)** is followed by the name of the Prophet, but in this essay I *intend* the phrase, hence on the understanding that it is intended and assumed that no disrespect is intended.

Significance of Eschatology in Islam

The Qur'an portrays to its reader striking and vivid images of *al-sā'ah* (the Hour), but the portents and signs of *al-sā'ah* are discussed in detail in the *aḥādīth* (traditions of the Prophet) understood to be legitimate Islamic doctrine. The significance and centrality of eschatology in Islam and knowing the portents to *al-sā'ah* is evident from the *ḥadīth* of *Jibrīl* - as it is famously known. In this authentic *ḥadīth*, angel *Jibrīl* appears in human form to teach the early Muslims the '*fundamentals'* of Islam: and amongst central notions of Islam; *shahādah* (to testify faith); *ṣalāh* (prayer); *zakāh* (charity); *ṣawm* (fasting); *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to the Muslim Holy land) and *iḥsān* : the question of the Last Day and its portents (signs) comes to occupy the latter part of the *ḥadīth*:

> [… *Jibrīl* then asked the Prophet the *final* question]:
>
> He [Gabriel] said: "Tell me about *al-sā'ah* – **The Hour**". He (The Prophet) commented: "The one who was asked knows no more than the one who asked". He said: **"Tell me some of its portents (signs)**". He (The Prophet) answered: "(Some of its portents are): That the slave girl will give birth to her mistress and master, that you will find barefooted, destitute goat herds competing one another in constructing the great huge buildings".…
>
> [Thereafter the Prophet] said: "He (the angel) was Gabriel, who came in order to teach you the matters of your religion". [2]

Here it is evident, that eschatology and the signs leading up to it are held significantly as part of the fundamentals of Islam.

Understanding the Notion of Imām Mahdī

The notion of the Mahdī in mainstream Islam is a simplistic one, that a man will emerge from the *umma* to lead the entire body of bewildered Muslims at the end times; he will come as the epitome of good and diminish all evil in the world alongside Jesus. Due to the vast number of *aḥādīth* it is believed to reach the level of *mashūr* or *ḥasan li ghairih* [3], hence anyone diverging from the idea would face staunch criticism. However, the matter is not as superficial as made out to be when passionately opposing this idea brought to the forefront are Ibn Khaldūn, Muhammad Iqbal and Javed Ghamidi. However, on the contrary I will analyse the interpretation and idea of the Mahdi by Imran Hosein, who despite differing from mainstream Islam in some aspects transforms the idea in modern contexts.

Iqbal denies the concept of Mahdī, as he believes, conviction in such a notion would stagnate the *umma*, hence the constructive struggle for good would be substituted by the idea of 'waiting for an individual'. Iqbal in his *Asrār-e-Khūdī* and *Rumūz-e-Bekhūdī* strongly denies any *ṣūfī* idea that distances the Muslim world from collective struggle, he is also believed to have transformed a Persian *ṣūfī* idiom in Iran of Sheikh Sa'dī, "*zamānā bāṭin-o-sāzad tū bāzamānā basās"* (if the era is at war with you, escape from it!), was later replaced by Iqbal's

[2] Muslim, H. N. (2005 C.E. – 1426 H.). *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: The authentic hadiths of Muslim, with full Arabic text (صحيح مسلم). (pp. 60-63)

[3] A *ḍa'īf ḥadīth*, which is strengthened by '*other' ḥadīth* supporting it in form and sense.

innovative idiom, "*zamānā bāṭin-o-sāzad tū bāzamānā satīs"*(if the era suppresses you, be at war against it!). For indeed Iqbāl takes the idea of *khūdī* and the passionate call to man to struggle to mould his own future from Bergson, 'Men do not sufficiently realise that their future is in their own hands. Theirs is the task of determining first of all whether they want to go on living or not'.[4] Alongside Iqbal, I believe, there are two problems with this notion; that it really sets aside the struggle of the *umma*; and secondly the state of incertitude the Muslim world is faced when a number of Mahdīs emerge claiming leadership. Iqbal further corroborates his argument by proving that this idea has penetrated into Islam from Magian and Zoroastrianism concepts of the return of Zoroaster's unborn sons. Ghamidi opines that it is the amalgamation of Shi'ite ḥadīth that have influenced later *muḥaddithūn* – subsequent to Mālik, and their influences from the region of Persia. Iqbal also sides with Ibn Khaldūn's denial and rejection of all the *ḥadīth asānīd* related to the Mahdī in his 'Muqaddimah' due to their *ḍu'f* (fragility).

Iqbal further illustrates through the notion that Spengler holds regarding the 'Magian group of religions', by which he means Judaism, ancient Chaldean religion, early Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Islam. Iqbal and Spengler believe a 'Magian crust' has grown over Islam, and particularly here in reference to eschatology, however Iqbal denies it to be from pure prophetic teachings and a true seeker must understand the essence of the finality of prophethood in Islam. Iqbal elaborates,

> 'The kernel of the prophetic teaching,' says Spengler, 'is already Magian. There is one God - be He called Yahweh, Ahuramazda, or Marduk-Baal - who is the principle of good, and all other deities are either impotent or evil. **To this doctrine there attached itself the hope of a Messiah**, very clear in Isaiah, but also bursting out everywhere during the next centuries, under pressure of an inner necessity. **It is the basic idea of Magian religion, for it contains implicitly the conception of the world-historical struggle between Good and Evil, with the power of Evil prevailing in the middle period, and the Good finally triumphant on the Day of Judgement.'** If this view of the prophetic teaching is meant to apply to Islam it is obviously a misrepresentation …No doubt, one important feature of Magian culture is a perpetual attitude of expectation, **a constant looking forward to the coming of Zoroaster's unborn sons**, **the Messiah, or the Paraclete** of the fourth gospel. I have already indicated the direction in which the student of Islam should seek the cultural meaning of the doctrine of finality in Islam. It may further be regarded as **a psychological cure for the Magian attitude of constant expectation which tends to give a false view of history**.[5]

Iqbal further clarifies his '*aqīdah* (belief) regarding the Mahdī in a letter dated 7 April 1932 to Muḥammad Aḥsan. In this letter among other ideas he states according to his firm belief ('*aqīdah*), 'all traditions relating to *mahdī*, *masīḥiyyat* [referring to the return of Jesus] and *mujaddidiyyat* [6] are the products of Persian and non-Arab imagination… and certainly they have *nothing* to do with the true spirit of the Qur'ān'.[7] It is interesting to note that Ghamdi's approach analysing the authenticity of *aḥādīth* is to verify them firstly with the Qur'an and

[4] Bergson, H. (1922). *Creative Evolution*. (p. 317)

[5] Iqbal, M. (2008). *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. (pp. 144-145)

[6] Marcia Hermansen compares the notion of millennia to *mujaddidiyyat* and terms it as 'centennialism' – based on a Prophetic tradition that a Renewer (*mujaddid*) would appear at the beginning of every century. Winter, T. (2008). *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*. (p. 316). See Eschatology.

[7] Iqbal, M. (1934). *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam.* Lecture V: The Spirit of Muslim Culture. See under footnote 61. Reference given to *Iqbālnāmah,* II, 231
Accessed online [21.04.2011]: http://www.ziyaraat.net/books/ReconstructionOfIslamicThought.pdf

thereafter to verify whether there is any such kind of *ḥadīth* in the Muwaṭṭa' of al-Imām Mālik. [8] As Irshad Abdal-Haqq explains, the characteristic of *Mālikī* methodology that distinguishes it from the other schools is the great weight it gives to the customary practises of the people of Medīna as a source of evidence of how the *sharī'ah* should be applied'.[9] Imām Mālik places '*amal* of the people of Madīna subsequent to the Qur'ān and *sunnah* and ahead of *ijmā'*; individual opinion of *ṣaḥābah*; *qiyās*; Isolated customs and practises of Madīnah; *istislāh* and '*urf*.[10] This would also include the *ḥadīth* he transmitted, as they were from the people of Madīna, hence were unlikely to be diluted with Persian and Zoroastrian influence.

This methodology applied by Ghamidi is one that would also prove to be cogent when analysing Schacht's criticism of later canonical Six Canonical books of *ḥadīth*. Schacht's argument was compelling and clear, 'books surviving from the ancient schools of law, like Mālik's Muwaṭṭa', include far more reports from later figures than from the Prophet himself.[11] Jonathan Brown further elaborates on Schacht's understanding,

> 'the collections compiled after al-Shāfi'ī, however, such as the canonical Six Books, were undeniably focused on Prophetic reports. Furthermore, these collections compiled often included reports attributed to the Prophet that the authors of earlier *ḥadīth* collections had attributed to Companions [*ṣaḥābah*] or Successors [*tābi'ūn*]. A report in the Muwaṭṭa' maybe attributed to a Companion while a generation later al-Shāfi'ī attributes the same report to the Prophet through a defective *mursal isnād* (in which there exists a gap in the *isnād* between the Prophet and the person quoting him). Two generations later. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī, we find the same *ḥadīth* with a *complete isnād* to the Prophet'.[12]

Brown concludes that according to Schacht many of the later traditions-after Muwaṭṭa'- must have been forged (*mauḍū'*) or *mursal*. For Schacht believes if such traditions really did exist earlier then Mālik would certainly have included them in his writings against his opponents in legal debates.[13]

Ghamidi further clarifies the understanding of the coming of a 'caliph', 'no doubt, some narratives, which are acceptable with regard to their chain of narration, inform us of the coming of a generous caliph; however, if they are deeply deliberated upon, it becomes evident that the caliph they refer to is 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz (d. 101 AH) who was the last caliph of the early history of the Muslims. This prediction of the Prophet (sws) has thus materialized in his personality word for word. One does not need to wait for any other Mahdī now'.[14]

[8] In Pakistan Javed Ahmad Ghamidi staunchly opposes dictatorship or any other form of governance which is based on an 'individual', and he argues that this feeling –due to the fiasco of democracy in Pakistan- is an influence of misunderstanding the notion of Mahdī and Jesus, which according to him have no real basis in Islam.

[9] Abdal-Haq, I. (1996). *The Journal of Islamic Law: An Overview of Its Origins and Elements.* (p.48)

[10] ibid.

[11] Schacht, J. (1967). *The Origins of Muhammad Jurisprudence*. (p. 22)

[12] Brown, J. A. C. (2009*). Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*. (p. 212). Under chapter: 'Western debates over historical reliability'.

[13] ibid.

[14] Ghamidi, J. A. (2009). *Islam: A Comprehensive Introduction – An English Rendering of Mīzān by Shehzad Saleem*. (p. 174)

However, Iqbal then approaches the subject from the traditionalist perspective, as one may ask what of the vast corpus of *aḥādīth* that illustrate the coming of the Mahdī in the end of times. To this Iqbal holds on to the argument presented by Ibn Khaldūn, he says,

> 'Ibn Khaldūn, seeing the spirit of his own view of history, has fully criticized and, I believe, finally demolished the alleged revelational basis in Islam of an idea similar, at least in its psychological effects, to the original Magian idea which had reappeared in Islam under the pressure of Magian thought'.[15]

Ibn Khaldūn in his Muqaddimah opposes all *aḥadith* concerning the Mahdī. He argues, 'that the Ṣūfīs have other theories concerning the Mahdī. The time, the man, and the place are clearly indicated in them'.[16] He further states, which is recorded only in the full version, 'they like to base themselves upon the removal (of the veil, *kashf*), which is the basis of their various (mystical) paths'.[17] Here it is evident that Ibn Khaldūn argues that the Ṣūfīs under the Fatimid dynasty have not approached the matter through reason or *ḥadīth* authenticity, but rather through *kashf*, which I will also argue is the case with Imran Hossein.

Ibn Khaldūn's outline of the argument is simply that the *aḥādīth* used by the Sufis are all from *ḥadīth* books and narrations other than the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*- al-Bukharī and Muslim. He quotes that the *aḥādīth* are primarily from the following sources:

> *'At-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, al-Bazzar, Ibn Majah, al-Hakim, at-Tabarani, and Abu Ya'la al-Mawsill'*.[18]

He further states that, 'their chains of transmission, have often been found objectionable by those who disapprove (of the matter)… because *ḥadīth* scholars acknowledge negative criticism to have precedence over positive criticism'.[19] However, subsequent to this statement Ibn Khaldūn falls behind the expectation of Ghamidi (and his teachers Farāḥī and Iṣlāḥī) when he affirms:

> 'it should ***not*** be said that the same faults often affect the persons (mentioned as authorites in) the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*. The general consensus [*ijmā'*] of *ḥadīth* transmitters confirms the soundness of the contents of the (two *Ṣaḥīḥs*) as presented by al-Bukharī and Muslim. **The uninterrupted general consensus** in Islam also confirms the acceptability of (the two *Saḥīḥs*) and the *necessity* of acting in accordance with their contents. ***General consensus is the best protection and defence***.[20]

Thereafter Ibn Khaldūn examines twenty four traditions regarding the Mahdī, and rejects them all. As he finds deficiency in the transmitters of every *ḥadīth*, I have given here an example of one such type as the criticism on all other twenty three are homogeneous:

> '(Al-Suhaylī) said: the tradition with the strangest chain of transmitters is the one mentioned by Abu Bakr al-Iskaf in the Fawā'id al-Akhbār…. [Abū Bakr al-Iskaf > Mālik ibn Anas > Muhammad ibn Munkadir > Jābir > The Messenger of God]: "He who does not believe in the Mahdī is an unbeliever and he who does not believe in the Antichrist is a liar".[21]

[15] Iqbal, M. (2008). *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. (p. 145)
[16] Khaldūn, I. (2005). *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. Trans. by Rosenthal F. (p. 258)
[17] Khaldūn, I. Complete Text of *The Muqaddimah*: [Accessed online: 06.01.2011]: http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ik/Muqaddimah/ and Specific Chapter III under subheading No.51 (*The Fatimid. The opinions of the people about him. The truth about the matter. Sufi opinions about the Mahdi): http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ik/Muqaddimah/Chapter3/Ch_3_51.htm*
[18] ibid.
[19] ibid.
[20] ibid.
[21] ibid.

Ibn Khaldūn criticises here the *matan* alongside the *isnād*, for the former he believes it to be 'an extreme statement', and the latter, 'that Abū Bakr al-Iskāf is considered by *ḥadīth* scholars as suspect and as a forger of traditions.[22] However, Ibn Khaldūn concludes on the point that many of his contemporary and earlier Ṣūfīs calculated his arrival, but their calculations have already been proven erroneous. Such as Ibn a-'Arab, who believed that the Mahdī would appear in *kh-f-j* years had passed: by this he meant the numerical value that is understood for letters. However, the time and dates passed and there was no sign of the Mahdī, even in contemporary times there are many who begin estimating his arrival.

Imran Hosein, a contemporary conservative eschatologist, has recently responded through article responses to the following questions from the grassroots: *'Is Imām al-Mahdī about to emerge?'*[23] And *'Will an Israeli attack on Iran provoke the emergence of another false Mahdī?'*[24] Imran Hosein's methodology and epistemology of determining eschatological meaning comprises of two ideas. Which he superficially describes as 'seeing with the *two* eyes' as compared to one, as '*Dajjāl* sees with only *one* eye': here Hosein refers to the internal (esoteric) and external (exoteric) epistemological meanings. As I mentioned earlier, Ibn Khaldūn differed from the notion of applying meaning understood from *kashf* of the *Ṣūfīs*. However, in determining exoteric meaning Hosein rejects the idea of an atomistic exegesis of the Qur'an and builds upon the methodology of his teacher, Maulānā Dr Fazlur Rahmān Anṣārī, of assessing each verse as part of an intelligible 'whole', and thereupon enshrouds it with Ṣūfī epistemological understanding.

Hosein insists that *Ṣūfī* masters of the past, such as al-Ghazālī and Rūmī, have both 'used the heart as a vehicle for the acquisition of knowledge'. He further elaborates:

> 'that the experience of the heart through which it '*sees'* and directly experiences 'truth', is frequently referred to in philosophy as 'religious experience'. In its wider sense, 'religious experience' also includes that internal intuitive spiritual grasp which delivers to the believer the 'substance' or 'reality' of things. The Prophet *(peace and blessings of Allah Most High be upon him)* referred to it when he warned: "Fear the *firāsah* (i.e., intuitive spiritual capacity for penetrating the substance of things) of the believer, for surely he sees with the light of Allah."[25]

Hosein here is referring to an epistemology, which on the contrary to modern Enlightenment, accepts 'religious experience' as a 'source of knowledge', which he refers to as the Ṣūfī epistemology. And thereafter defines such inner knowledge as *'ilm al-bāṭin*: which Ibn Khaldūn defines as *kashf* and staunchly repudiates. However, I believe it difficult to determine which knowledge acquired from the contrasting *kushūf* (pl. of *kashf*) of individuals to give credence to, in a contemporary setting as well as *kushūf* determined in conflicting political environments. As I will discuss this matter under the interpretation of Gog and Magog, where Imran Hosein interprets them to be Russia and America, and on the contrary

[22] ibid.

[23] For full article response see: Accessed online [22.04.2011]: http://www.imranhosein.org/articles/signs-of-the-last-day/267-is-imam-al-mahdi-about-to-emerge.html

[24] For complete article refer to: Accessed online [22.04.2011]: http://www.imranhosein.org/articles/signs-of-the-last-day/250-will-an-israeli-attack-on-iran-provoke-the-emergence-of-another-false-mahdi.html

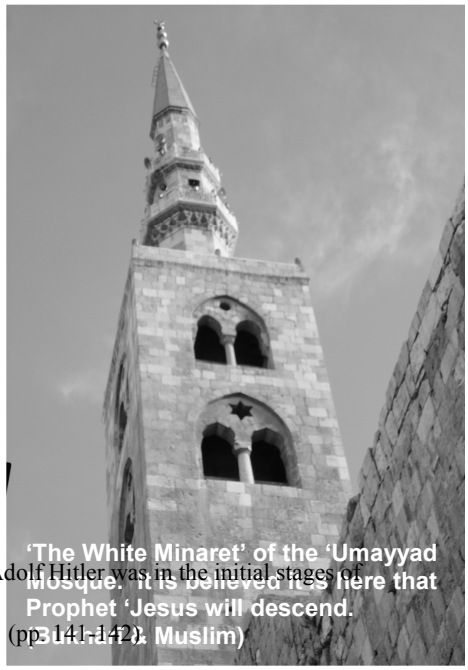
[25] Hosein, I. N. (2010). *Iqbāl and Pakistan's Moment of Truth.* (Article) See Under: 'The Sufi Epistemology'. [Accessed 23.04.2011]: http://www.imranhosein.org/articles/islam-and-politics/184-iqbl-and-pakistans-moment-of-truth.html?showall=1

Anwar Shāh al-Kashmīrī believes them to be The Soviet Union [26] and The British (British Empire). These two Ṣūfī epistemological interpretations were set in deferring political backgrounds, the former in contemporary and latter in 1930's. However, when elucidating his position on the exoteric methodology, Hosein advocates the idea of his teacher Anṣārī:

> 'Now, besides consistency, the conformability of the Holy Qur'ān in its various parts… brings us to the logic of theoretic consciousness, which, too, is inherent in the holy book, even as the logic of religious consciousness is enshrined therein. The conformability, however, signifies, in the estimation of the best Qur'ānic authorities, not only uniformity of teaching but also **the principle that all the verses of the holy book are inter-related as parts of an intelligible system**—whereby the existence of a system of meaning in the Holy Qur'ān is positively established, as also the technique of the exposition of that system.'[27]

Hosein and Anṣārī, both affirm a modern exegesis, of approaching each verse or even each *ḥadīth* as part of a whole, as compared to earlier pre-modern atomistic approaches to the Qur'anic text. This approach to the text is similar to all contemporary exegetes such as' Ḥamīduddīn Farāḥī, Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī and somewhat to Sayyid Quṭb and Thanwī, the former of which emphasise the '*amūd* within each *sūra*; pair of *sūratain*; group of *suwar* and the Qur'an. However, in eschatological contexts when approaching the sources from the two fold methodology, he further elaborates, 'Our methodology of study requires us to locate the *system of meaning* which binds the totality of our data pertaining to the subject of 'Signs of the Last Day' into a harmonious and integrated whole. That *system of meaning*, in turn, would allow us to identify those *aḥādīth* which are, or appear to be, in conflict or discord with the main body of data of the system as derived from the *Qur'an* and the *aḥādīth*… we then *exclude* from our study such *aḥādīth* or *intetrpretations of aḥādīth* that are in contradiction or discord with that expanded *system of meaning'*.[28]

However, Hosein's idea behind the Mahdī and the second coming of Jesus is to relive the experience of Jesus' initial period. He recognises a similarity between John the Baptist and the Mahdī. Hence, Hosein identifies the nature of the historical process to be, 'the question of positive identification of the Messiah (when he was to appear) was solved by way of a special person who was raised by Allah Most High, and was commissioned to make that positive identification. John the Baptist not only kept on declaring to all and sundry that the Messiah was coming but, additionally, it was before John that Jesus appeared when he returned to the Holy Land as an adult. John faced him and publicly declared: *This is the man you have been waiting for; this is the Messiah*.[29] This was the divine method of ensuring



'The White Minaret' of the 'Umayyad Mosque. It is believed it is here that Prophet 'Jesus will descend. (Bukhārī & Muslim)

[26] In Faiḍ al-Bārī, he also includes Germany, as towards the end of al-Kashmīrīs life, Adolf Hitler was in the initial stages of his onslaught.

[27] Ansari, M. F. R. (2008). The *Qur'ānic Foundations & Structure of Muslim Society*. (pp. 141-142). Also available online [Accessed 22.04.2011]: http://www.fazlurrahmanansari.org/QFSMS/QFSMSI-BookI.pdf

[28] Hosein, I. N. (2009). An *Islamic View of Gog and Magog in the Modern World*. (pp. 91-92)

[29] I believe Hosein here refers to Matthew 3:11, *'but he who is coming after me is mightier than I , whose sandals I am not worthy to carry'*.

'positive identification' of the Messiah! Similarly when the Messiah is to return, God would raise another man whose function would be the same as that of John. The historical process thus maintains consistency. Imām al-Mahdī's role is identical to that of John the Baptist'.[30] It is interesting to note how in accordance to the traditions the initial meeting of the Mahdī and the Messiah would be in Damascus, by the 'white minaret' which according to Muslim understanding is the 'Umayyad Mosque'.[31] And, incidentally, the tomb of John the Baptist is venerated in the very mosque. However, Hosein further reinforces the concept of the alliance of Jesus and the Mahdī by introducing the Old Testament into '*the intelligible whole'*. This method is also applied by Ghamidi when interpreting the notion of *Ya'jūj* and *Ma'jūj* (Gog and Magog). As Ghamidi tends to go back to the Old Testament to understand the *Ya'jūj* and *Ma'jūj*.

Imran Hossein further corroborates his line of argument and suggests that the Jews related to the Qumran writings were expecting not one but *two* Messiahs. He argues,

> From certain other passages in the Qumran writings, it appears quite certain that this community, which was fundamentally *a priestly one*, expected an especially *anointed high priest* ('the Messiah of Aaron) as well as an especially anointed lay ruler ('the Messiah of Israel'). It should be noted that in the Cairo Damascus Document (CD 7:20) the royal Messiah is not called a 'king', but a 'prince', (nasi in keeping with Ezek. 34:24; 37:25; etc). 'The concept of two Messiahs, one royal and one priestly, probably goes back to Zechariah 4:14: 'These are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth'.[32]

Hosein further elaborates,

> 'In addition to those two there was to be a third person who could not have been any other than Prophet Muhammad: "The rule which they (i.e., the priestly community in Qumran) received from him (i.e., their teacher) was to be their way of life 'until the coming of a Prophet and of the anointed ones of Aaron and Israel'.[33]

It is evident that Hosein points towards a unique dual approach to the Messiah, where one is sent prior to the coming of the ultimate. However, it would be an interesting research to determine whether the idea of the Messiah in Judaism has Babylonian roots, as Jerusalem was sacked by Nebuchadnezzar and the Jews remained in Babylonia before their return.

Hence, for Hosein the idea of Messiah – Mahdī cannot be repudiated in any circumstance. He therefore believes that Iqbal was not 'immune' from the negative influence of Western epistemology and argues that Iqbal when expressing his ideas in poetry, would do so from the heart and use ṣūfī epistemology as witnesses in his poem of regarding 'khidr - e – waqt': *"out of the seclusion of the desert of Hejaz, the divinely-illuminated Guide of the Time (Khidr-e-Waqt) is to come. And from the far, far away valley, the Caravan is to make it appearance".*[34] On the contrary Hosein believed when addressing these issues in English

[30] Hosein, I. N. (2010). *Iqbāl and Pakistan's Moment of Truth.* (Article) See Under: 'Iqbāl rejects belief in the advent of Imam al-Mahdi'.

[31] See Saḥīḥ Muslim bk 41, ḥadīth no. 7015: … 'he [Christ, son of Mary] will descend at the white minaret in the eastern side of Damascus'…

[32] Encyclopedia Judaica – Eschatology – Messianism cited in Hosein, I. N. (2010). *Iqbāl and Pakistan's Moment of Truth.*

[33] *Iqbāl and Pakistan's Moment of Truth.* Cited from: 1 Qumran Scrolls 9:11 (Encyclopedia Judaica – Yahad – Eschatological Hope)

[34] Hosein, I. N. (2010). *Iqbāl and Pakistan's Moment of Truth.* Hosein here believes that Iqbal here is referring to the Mahdī and assumes a 'dual' nature in Iqbalian thought.

prose and to an educated audience, he quite contradicted his ideas in Persian and Urdu poetry and therefore suggests Iqbal's *duality* in thought.

Overview of the Mahdī Concept

The concept of the Mahdī in mainstream Islamic eschatology is significant, yet contentious due to its appearance in preponderant *ḍa'īf* (fragile) *ḥadīth*. I initiated by analysing Iqbal's approach, which is based upon the stagnant element found within the concept of the Mahdī and the concept's disagreement with his idea of *khūdī*. He disapproved of the notion by explaining the influence of Zoroastrianism through Spengler's criticism, which Ghamidi transforms as Zoroastrian influence on Shi'i Islam and *ḥadīth* and thereafter the influence of Shi'i ideology on mainstream *sunnī* Islam. Iqbal conforms to ibn Khaldun's traditional method of *ḥadīth matan* and *isnād* criticism.

I thereafter examined Ghamidi's innovative methodology of analysing the meaning of *ḥadīth matan* in light of the Qur'an as a whole, hence the Qur'an is seen as a *mīzān* and *furqān* to distinguish between pure concepts from influenced ones. If such a concept finds no backing in the Qur'an, he then applies similar methodology, but with the *Muwaṭṭa'* of Imām Mālik. The reason for giving such precedence to the *Muwaṭṭa'* is due to the notion that *Muwaṭṭa'* was amongst the first *ḥadīth* compilations; compiled in Madīna; Imām Mālik's principle of giving *tarjīḥ* (precedence) to 'the '*amal* of the people of Madīna'; hence it is most likely due to these reasons that the *Muwaṭṭa'* remained impervious to Persian concepts and culture. This method, as I analysed was cogent to Schacht's notion of *ḥadīth isnād* criticism. However, Ghamidi's method seems to be reminiscent to the *wahhābī* and puritan methodology, at times more extreme.

The idea that mere *interpretation* or simply finding a notion in a ḥadīth sufficient for determines truth in Islam is a simplistic one. Ibn Khaldun's *matan* and *isnād* criticism of *ḥadīth* proves otherwise. It is therefore evident from Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddima* that even *ḥadīth* authentication plays a significant role in determining Islamic practises, concepts and fundamentals.

I then concluded on examining Imran Hosein's methodology which echoes that of mainstream *sunnī* Islam, yet is modern in nature. For Hosein it is significant that verses and *aḥādīth* about eschatology be interpreted by implementing two methods: Exoteric and Esoteric: the former of which he bases on the methodology of his teacher, and the latter he enshrouds the former with – Sūfī epistemology (religious experience). He further tries to determine the notion of the Mahdī through the historical process, 'the question of positive identification of the Messiah and likens the notion of the Mahdī to that of John the Baptist. He finally includes the Old Testament and Qumran writings into his understanding of the intelligible whole.

However, this was an analysis of a notion prevalent and found in *ḍa'īf* (fragile) *aḥādīth*, traditions with debilitated *mutūn* or *asānīd*, where the Qur'an was void of any such idea or

al-aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥa. Now I hasten to assess notions of eschatology *not* in the Qur'an but found in the bulk of *al-aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥa*, which include the canonical books Al-Bukhārī, Muslim and the Muwaṭṭa (i.e., Christ and Anti-Christ – *Dajjāl*)'; and finally a notion present in the Qur'an, but holding diverse interpretations (i.e., *Ya'jūj* and *Ma'jūj*).

Christ (second coming of Jesus) and the Anti-Christ (*al-Dajjāl*)

The eschatological concept of the Christ (second coming of Jesus) and the Anti-Christ (*al-Dajjāl* – the epitome of evil), again in mainstream Islamic theology is an issue of great significance. It is an eschatology which also influences Muslim and Jewish-Christian relations, 'an end of time showdown between the Abrahamic Religions'. However, the difference between the notions of the Mahdī and the *Return of Christ* to overcome the *Anti-Christ (Dajjāl),* is the level of authenticity they both hold. For the former, it is proven through a bulk of *ḍa'īf* narrations, and if *ṣaḥīḥ* narrations exist it is interpreted to be 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-Azīz according to those who disapprove of the orthodox position, such as Iqbal, Ibn Khaldun and Ghamidi. The latter notion is contrastive due to its prevalence in not merely *ḍa'īf aḥādīth*, but also *aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥa* which include the Canonical books of al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Muwaṭṭa'. Although Muhammad Iqbal had elaborated in his Letter to Muhammad Ahsan regarding his denial of *masīḥiyyat* (return of Jesus), he does not present an argument for it, as unlike *mahdiyyat*, the notion *masīḥiyyat* is clearly found in *ṣaḥīḥ aḥādīth*. However, I will analyse Ghamidi's methodology for rejecting the notion of *masīḥiyyat* (the second coming of Jesus), which is contrary to *ṣaḥīḥ aḥādīth* (Al-Bukhārī and Muslim) and mainstream Islamic theology.

Ghamidi's Methodology

According to traditional methodology Qur'ānic texts are analysed in the light of *aḥādīth* (pl. of *ḥadīth*), however Ghamidi argues that the Qur'ān is to be held as the criterion (*al-furqān*) in determining the authority of the *ḥadīth matan*. Hence, his approach towards verses and *aḥādīth* illustrating eschatology in Islam differ from mainstream. Ghamidī, has built upon the methodology and hermeneutics of his teacher and mentor Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, who transformed the hermeneutics of his teacher Ḥamīduddīn Farāḥī. Farāḥī believed he was amongst the first group of scholars who were intent on the criticism of *ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī, which was not really attempted in the past by traditionalist scholars. Therefore I believe it is from Farāḥī that Ghamidi builds upon his notion of *ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī and Muslim criticism. Hence, due to this epistemology, change in thought was evident. As mentioned earlier Ibn Khaldūn, despite his critical analysis of the Mahdī *aḥādīth* he was adamant regarding the *asānīd* of *ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī and Muslim, which he believed were authentic due to the *ijmā'* of the '*Umma*.

Ghamidi's approach to *ḥadīth* is similar to that of the traditionalists, but he differs in certain aspects of it, hence arrives at contrasting conclusions as compared to the conservative body of scholars. Ghamidi insists that, '*aḥādīth* are mostly *akhbār-i aḥād* (isolate reports). It is

absolutely evident that they do not add to the contents of religion stated in the Qur'ān and Sunna… [hence] it is outside the scope of *Aḥādīth* to give an independent directive not covered by the Qur'ān and *Sunnah'*.[35] For Ghamidi *ḥadīth* must be scrutinised through five channels before it could be accepted; (1) Literary appreciation of the Arabic language; (2) Interpretation in the light of the Qur'an; (3) Understanding the occasion of the *ḥadīth*; (4) Analysis of all the variant texts and (5) Reason and revelation. However, prior to this Ghamidi differs to traditionalists when explaining the critical analysis of the 'chain of narrations of a *ḥadīth'* (*isnād*) and 'text of ḥadīth' (matan). On the former notion Ghamidi differs on the following point:

> 'no narrative attributed to the Prophet (sws) *even* if found in primary works as the *al-Jāmi al-Ṣaḥīḥ* of **Imām Bukhārī**, *al-Jāmi al-Ṣaḥīḥ* of **Imām Muslim** and the ***Muwaṭṭa'*** of Imām Mālik can be accepted without application of this standard'.[36]

As mentioned earlier Ghamidi, here differs from the traditionalists and follows the innovative theory of his teachers Islahi and Farahi. He further elaborates on criticism of the *matan*,

> 'Nothing in it should be against the Qur'ān and Sunnah … nothing in it should be against established facts derived from knowledge and reason … in religion the Qur'ān is the *mīzān* (the scale of truth) and the *furqān* (the distinguisher between truth and falsehood).[37] [38]

It is in the light of these differences that I will now examine where Ghamidi differs from traditionalists.

Ghamidi's main idea in rejecting the second coming of Jesus and the Mahdi is the notion of the analysis of *ḥadīth* in the light of the Qur'an. Ghamidi explains the main crux of his denial of the notion of *masīḥiyyat* and *mahdiyyat*:

> 'The reason is that the narratives of the advent of Mahdi [and the advent of Jesus] do not conform to the standards of *ḥadīth* criticism set forth by the *muḥaddithūn*. **As far as the narratives which record the advent of Jesus (sws) are concerned, though the *muḥaddithūn* have generally accepted them; however, if they are analyzed in the light of the Qur'an, they too become dubious'**.[39]

Ghamidi gives three aspects in the light of the Qur'an in his work '*Islam: A Comprehensive Introduction*' of why the *aḥādīth* in the *ṣiḥāḥ* regarding the return of Jesus cannot be taken seriously. He argues,

> **'Firstly,** the personality of Jesus (sws) has been discussed in the Qur'an from various aspects. The Qur'an has commented on his *da'wah* mission and his personality at a lot of places. The cataclysm that will take place on the Day of Judgement is also a very frequently discussed topic of the Qur'an. The advent of a celebrated prophet of God from the heavens is no small an incident. In spite of the fact that there were many instances in which this incident could have been mentioned, we find that there is not a single place in which it is mentioned in the Qur'an. Can human knowledge and intellect be satisfied with this silence? One does find this hard to digest.

[35] Ghamidi, J. A. Principles of Understanding Hadith. Accessed online [29.04.2011]: http://www.al-mawrid.org/pages/articles_english_detail.php?rid=148&cid=43

[36] ibid.

[37] ibid.

[38] Ghamidi, J. A. (2009). *Islam: A Comprehensive Introduction – An English Rendering of Mīzān by Shehzad Saleem*. (p. 67)

[39] Ghamidi, J. A. (2009). *Islam: A Comprehensive Introduction – An English Rendering of Mīzān by Shehzad Saleem*. (p. 174)

> **Secondly,** the Qur'an has recorded a dialogue of God with Jesus (sws) which will take place on the Day of Judgement. During the course of this conversation, the Almighty will ask him about the real sphere in which the Christians had gone astray: the divinity of Jesus (sws) and Mary. He will ask Jesus (sws) if it was as per His instructions that he had told people to deify himself and his mother whilst leaving aside God. In response to this question, among other things, Jesus (sws) will say that he instructed his people in the very manner he was asked by God and that as long as he remained among them he watched over what they were doing, and that after his own demise he was not aware of what good or evil they did, and that after his death it was God who watched over them. **In this dialogue, one can clearly feel that the last sentence is very inappropriate if Jesus (sws) had also come in this world a second time.** In such a case, he should have responded by saying that he knew what happened with them and that a little earlier he had gone to warn them of their grievous faults. The Qur'an says: *Never did I say to them except what You commanded me to do: "Worship Allah my Lord and your Lord," and I was a witness over them while I dwelt with them. When You gave death to me, You were the Watcher over them and You are a witness over all things.* (5:117)
>
> **Thirdly,** in one verse of the Qur'an, the Almighty has disclosed what will happen to Jesus (sws) and his followers till the Day of Judgement. Sense and reason demand that here He should also have disclosed his second coming before the advent of this Day; however, we find no such mention. **If Jesus (sws) had to come, why was silence maintained at this instance?** One is unable to comprehend any reason for it. The verse is: *"O Jesus! I have decided to give death to you and raise you to Myself and cleanse you from these people who have denied [you]. I shall make those who follow you superior to those who reject faith till the Day of Judgement. Then to Me you shall all return. So at that time I shall give My verdict in what you have been differing in."* (3:55)'.[40]

Hence, at the heart of Ghamidi's argument is embedded the idea that the Qur'an is empty from any such notion. He then argues at two instances in the Qur'an where the second coming of Jesus could have been illustrated due to the significance of the matter. However, Ghamidi further illustrates why it is imperative to reject the notions of *masīḥiyyat* and *mahdiyyat*, he believes again that these notions have crept into the corpus of *ḥadīth* through Shi'ite *aḥādīth*. Hence he contends, despite the vast number of *ḥadīth* regarding the advent of Jesus in the *ṣaḥīḥ's* of Bukhārī and Muslim, that the Muwaṭṭa' of Imam Mālik must be sought. Due to the concept, as mentioned earlier, that the Muwaṭṭa was most *unlikely* influenced by Zoroastrian, Magian and Shi'ite ideology. Despite it having *aḥādīth* regarding the Anti-Christ (*Dajjāl*) there is no mention of the second coming of Jesus.

However, after sifting through the *ḥadīth* corpus of Muwaṭṭa Imām Mālik one is forced to re-examine a *ḥadīth* which does not 'directly' deal with the matter but has within it scope to appreciate the notion rejected by Ghamidi:

> 'And Yaḥyā narrated from **Mālik**, on the authority of **Nafi'**, from **'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar** that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said: "I dreamt this night that I was at the *ka'ba*. I saw a dark man, like the most handsome of dark men you have ever seen. He had hair reaching to between his ears and his shoulders, like the most excellent of such hair you have seen. He had combed his hair, and water was dripping from it. He was leaning on two men or on the shoulders of two men doing the circumambulation (*ṭawāf*) around the *Ka'ba*. I asked: Who is that? It was said: This is Jesus Christ, the son of Mary. Then I was with a man with wiry

[40] ibid., (p. 175)

hair and blind in his right eye, as if it was a floating grape. I asked: who is that? It was said to me: This is the antichrist".[41]

This very *ḥadīth* is also narrated in *ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* with the following chain of narrators:

محمد بن اسماعيل البخاري > حدثنا عبد الله بن مسلمة ، عن ***مالک*** ، عن ***نافع*** ، عن ***عبد اللہ بن عمر*** رضی اللہ عنهما :

ان رسول اللہ صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم قال: ۔۔۔ الیٰ أخرِ الحدیث

This *sanad* (one comprising of **Mālik** > **Nāfi'** > '**Abdullāh ibn 'Umar**) is considered by al-Bukhārī as the most authentic in the prodigious corpus of *aḥadīth*, and is entitled *'silsila al-dhahab'*- the Golden chain of narrators.[42] Here Ghamidi argues that there is no explicit or implicit indication towards the second coming of Jesus as the Prophet had seen other Prophets, such as Moses and Abraham, in his dream but that in no way determined their second coming. And as they are from individual reports Ghamidi disregards of them and agrees with Ibn 'Abdu'l Barr, '(وأهل السنة مصدقون بنزول عيسى في الآثار الثابتة بذلك عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم من نقل الآحاد العدول)' 'The *Ahl-i-Sunnah* testify to the decent of Jesus mentioned in the authentic sayings from the Prophet (sws) transmitted through the individual reports by narrators who are of sound characters'.[43] Hence, it is known that individual reports do not 'form a source of certain knowledge'. However, I believe, that the mention of Jesus (Christ) and *Dajjāl* (Anti-Christ) in one tradition has its suspicions – as to why are they illustrated together in one single *ḥadīth*. It is also interesting to note that due to the mention of Dajjāl in other *ḥadīth* of the Muwaṭṭa', he accepts the coming of an Anti-Christ in contrast to Christ. I believe this notion to be misleading as again it could be argued that there is no explicit or implicit mention of Dajjāl in the Qur'anic text. However, earlier *tafāsīr* indicate the implicit verse regarding second coming of Jesus, and Sayyid Quṭb affirms that due to its vast majority of traditions it is likely that this verse could be taken for the second coming of Jesus, as the sign of *al-sā'ah*:

ثم يعود إلى تقرير شيء عن عيسى عليه السلام. يذكرهم بأمر الساعة التي يكذبون بها أو يشكون فيها:

وإنه لعلم الساعة. فلا تمترن بها. واتبعون. هذا صراط مستقيم. ولا يصدنكم الشيطان إنه لكم عدو مبين

وردت أحاديث شتى عن نزول عيسى عليه السلام. إلى الأرض قبيل الساعة وهو ما تشير إليه الآية: {وإنه لعلم للساعة } بمعنى أنه يُعلم بقرب مجيئها ، والقراءة الثانية { وإنه لَعَلَم للساعة } بمعنى أمارة وعلامة. وكلاهما قريب من قريب.[44]

It is interesting to note also at this point, that due to the mere difference in criticising Bukhārī and Muslim or not, determines whether eschatology in Islam holds the notion of the second coming of Christ. As Ibn Khaldun argued,

> 'The general consensus of *hadith* transmitters confirms the soundness of the contents of (the two *Sahihs*) as presented by al-Bukhari and Muslim. The uninterrupted general consensus in

[41] Mālik, A. (2000). *Muwaṭṭa' Imām Mālik: Narrated by Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā ibn Kathīr al-Laithī al-Andulusī.* (p. 421)

[42] Ahmad, H. (1420H). 'Imaam Maalik ibn Anas'. *'Al Jumuah' Magazine Volume 11 - Issue 9 – Ramadhan 1420 H.* Accessed online [27.04.2011]: http://www.sunnahonline.com/ilm/seerah/0041.htm

[43] Accessed online [30.04.2011]: cited from Ibn 'Abdu'l Barr, Al-Istidhkar, Ist ed., vol. 26, (Cairo: Darul Wa'i Halb, 1993), p. 236 : http://www.renaissance.com.pk/Septresp2y4.html

[44] Qutb, S. *فی ظلال القرآن*
Arabic Text accessed online (26.04.2011): http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=53&tSoraNo=43&tAyahNo=61&tDisplay=yes&Page=4&Size=1&LanguageId=1

> Islam also confirms the acceptability of (the two *Sahihs*) and the necessity of acting in accordance with their contents. General consensus is the best protection and defence'.[45]

Hence, the major difference between the two arguments originates in the principle of jurisprudence, where Ghamidi in this case does not give credence to *ijmā'* in contrast to Ibn Khaldūn. Despite *ijmā'* being a principle of Islamic Jurisprudence, it is not a divinely revealed source and the universality of *ijma'* is still disputed.[46]

Similar to the notion of the return of Christ is the notion of the Anti-Christ, yet there is far less dispute. As *Dajjāl* has been spoken of in all the *ṣiḥāḥ* books, including the *Muwaṭṭa'* of Imām Mālik and is also mentioned in a *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth* of Muslim, which mentions ten signs before the Last Day and does not include the *Mahdī* and *Masīḥ* concepts. However, it is of great significance to understand how the notion of *Dajjāl* is used in modern polemics aimed at the 'Zionists' and 'Freemasons'. This notion is to understand *Dajjāl* (the Anti-Christ) as not merely an individual but a system – similar to one of the Jewish understandings of the Messiah.

Ahmad Thomson asserts a broader understanding of the notion of *Dajjāl*, not merely a physical epitome of evil. He contends, 'There are three aspects of the *Dajjāl*. There is *Dajjāl* the individual. There is *Dajjāl* as a world wide social and cultural phenomenon. There is *Dajjāl* as an unseen force'.[47] He further elaborates the three phenomena's of the *Dajjāl*:

> 'It is clear that before the *Dajjāl* the individual appears on earth, there must already be present and established the system, and the people running that system, which and who will support and follow him when he does appear. Evidence of that system, and the people running that system, is evidence of *Dajjāl* as a world wide social and cultural phenomenon, and *Dajjāl* as an unseen force. The signs of these broader aspects of *Dajjāl*, that is what *Dajjāl* the individual will epitomise, are very apparent today, which would indicate that *Dajjāl* the individual is soon to appear'.[48]

However, again this notion creates uncertainty within the Muslim *umma* due to the secretive nature of the Freemasons and the Zionists. However, it is interesting to note here that Imran Hosein indicates the presence of this notion under the umbrella of a Jewish-Christian Zionist (Evangelical) alliance in an implicit verse:

> *You who believe, do not take the Jews and Christians as allies: they are allies only to each other"* (Qur'ān 5:51)

For Hosein believes that there existed no such alliance between Jews and Christians in the medieval period until modern times. Hence, there exit a lot of contemporary conspiracies regarding the alliance of the Jews and Christians: and verses and *aḥādīth* are therefore approached with a *preconceived* notion of such an alliance against the Muslim *umma*. And this eschatological preconception opens up Pandora's Box of uncertainties. This notion then leads to again, a set preconceived interpretation of *Ya'jūj* and *Ma'jūj* (Gog and Magog).

[45] Khaldūn, I. Complete Text of *The Muqaddimah*: [Accessed online: 06.01.2011]: http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ik/Muqaddimah/ and Specific Chapter III under subheading No.51 (*The Fatimid. The opinions of the people about him. The truth about the matter. Sufi opinions about the Mahdi): http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ik/Muqaddimah/Chapter3/Ch_3_51.htm*

[46] Kamali, M. H. (2008). *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*. (p. 228)

[47] Thomson, A. (2007). *Dajjal: the Anti Christ*. 8th ed. (p. 6)

[48] ibid.

Ya'jūj and *Ma'jūj*

Ya'jūj and *Ma'jūj* are the same tribes mentioned in the Old Testament. However, in fragile and fabricated *aḥādīth* narrations there is a mythological image painted of them; some enormous; some dwarfed; some having ears so large that they could take cover with them; and vivid images of them drinking all the waters of the world dry. However, these striking images I believe are all from *mauḍū'* (fabricated) *aḥādīth*, which were probably influenced by early myths of the Khazars: as described by Kevin Alan Brook in *'The Jews of Khazaria'*.[49]

However, there are diverse interpretations regarding the identification of the *Ya'jūj* and *Ma'jūj*: and as mentioned earlier, some are Sufī epistemological approaches. However, I argued that the 'preconception' of the idea due to the occurrences in the world played a greater role in these Sufi interpretations. For instance Anwar Shah Kashmiri (died 1933 C.E.) believed that *Ya'juj* were the Soviet Union, who were in power at the time, he also believed *Majūj* were the people of the British Empire – as India was under British rule.

اما الروس فهم من ذرية ياجوج[50]

ان ياجوج و ماجوج لا يبعد ان يكونوا اهل روسيا و بريطانيا [51]

'As for the Soviet Union, they are from amongst the descendants of *Ya'jūj'*… it is not unlikely that the *Ya'jūj* and *Ma'jūj* are the people of the Soviet Union and the British Empire'. In his Faiḍ al-Bārī, he adds to the list of 'Superpowers' Germany:

و كذا المانيا ايضا منهم[52]

However, it is interesting to note how less then a century later Imran Hossein believes United States of America and Russia to be from *Ya'jūj* and *Ma'jūj*. However, he also argues that it was initially from the Jews of Khazar, where the wall built by *dhū al-Qarnain*, that spread into the West and ultimately America. Hence it was from America that they then formed an alliance to take control of Israel. Hosein, with his preconceived notion of the matter, then points towards this from the *ḥadīth* regarding the 'drying of the Sea of Galilee', which is now taking place. He also hints towards the <u>return of the Jews to the Holy Land</u> and **<u>a final confrontation</u>** from an implicit indication in a verse of the Qur'an:

> *"We declared to the Children of Israel in the Scripture, '<u>Twice you will you spread corruption in **the land**</u> and become highly arrogant!' When the first of these warnings was fulfilled, <u>We sent against you servants of Ours with great force</u>, and they ravaged your homes. <u>That warning was fulfilled</u>… <u>and when the second warning was fulfilled [We sent them] to shame your faces and enter the place of worship as they did the first time, and utterly destroy whatever fell into their power.. **but if you do the same again, so shall We**</u>*' (Qur'an 17:4-8).

[49] Brook, K. A. (2006). *The Jews of Khazaria*. 2nd ed. (pp. 1-18)

[50] Kashmīrī, A. S. (No date). (*فیض الباری علی صحیح البخاری*). (Vol. 4, p. 23)

[51] Gilani, M. A. (1425 A.H.). *سورۂ کہف کی تفسیر کے تناظر میں؛ دجالی فتنہ کے نمایاں خط و خال Sura-e-kahf ki tafsir ke tanazur me: dajjali fitne ke numaya khatt aw khal*. (p. 265)

[52] Kashmīrī, A. S. (No date). *Faiḍ al-Bārī 'alā Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (فیض الباری علی صحیح البخاری). (Vol. 4, p. 23)

The key phrase emphasised by Hosein is **وَإِنْ عُدتُّمْ عُدْنَا** , and he translates this verse as, *'if you return [for a third time to Jerusalem- the Holy Land] We will return [with Our punishment]'*. Hosein further interprets '*Our punishment'* with *'the Muslim Army'* – followed by earlier, first and second Temple destruction, by the Babylonian and Roman armies. However it is clear that these understandings are based on *interpretation*. Hosein quotes a *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī and Muslim (*muttafaq 'alaih*) which further corroborates his argument:

> Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Apostle said, "*The Hour* will not be established until you fight with the Jews, and the stone behind which a Jew will be hiding will say. "O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him." [53]

Hosein further suggests that the Jews illustrated in this *ḥadīth* refer not to Orthodox and conservative Jews, but rather the Jews in the Zionist alliance. David Cook also speaks of the modern interpretation which transforms *Banū Isrā'īl* to the 'State of Israel' in his book 'Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature'.[54]

Under such interpretations one could see where this takes Jewish – Muslim relations in the future. Particularly, when the notions of the *Mahdī*, the Messiah and *al-Dajjāl* begin to overlap, where the Jewish Messiah becomes the Anti-Christ for the Muslim mind and vice versa. It seems at the end of the tunnel there is no light, and the future of this relation seams bleak when interpretations take this course.

However, the purpose of this essay was to give the reader a glimpse of the complexities of dealing with sacred texts (Qur'an and *Ḥadīth*) and their interpretations. I therefore looked at three concepts (1) the Mahdī; (2) the Christ (Jesus - the second coming) and Anti-Christ (*al-Dajjāl*); and (3) *Ya'jūj* and *Ma'jūj* (Gog and Magog) due to the diversity of their authenticity in relation to the principles of *uṣūl al-ḥadīth* and vast interpretations. However, in the midst of political upheaval in the world one almost forgets that many a times concepts and theories in Islam are based upon *ḍa'īf aḥādīth* and individual interpretations, which are not divinely inspired within Sunni Islam. But, on the contrary such 'interpretations' are treated as divine sources: which at times, particularly when understanding the relations between the Abrahamic faiths in Eschatology, is contrary to the actual essence of Islam.

[53] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Book 52, Hadith 177) . Accessed online [01.05.2011]: http://www.searchtruth.com/book_display.php?book=52&translator=1&start=0&number=177

[54] Cook, D. (2005). *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature.* (pp. 98-125) – Under Chapter: 'Qur'ān 17:4-8 , From *Banū Isrā'īl* to Israel'.

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